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SUBJECT: KENYA: CURRENT CONDITIONS IN DADAAB REFUGEE CAMP

REF: NAIROBI 085

Summary

11. (SBU) The three camps that comprise Dadaab refugee camp currently house over 260,000 refugees, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) expects the number could increase in the coming months due to the suspension of food assistance in al-Shabaab controlled areas of Somalia and increased fighting in that country. UNHCR and NGOs have also ramped up security in Dadaab due to security alerts and an increase in reports of armed men in the camps. UNHCR received permission from the Garissa County Council (GCC) for an extension of the Ifo camp but is waiting for an official report by the demarcation team sent by the GCC before developing a budget or starting to develop the site. Host community relations and land encroachment by locals remain areas of concern for UNHCR and other agencies as they plan their activities for 2010. In 2010, UNHCR selected Windle Trust Kenya to take over the management of secondary education from CARE, with CARE retaining responsibility for primary education in Dadaab. UNHCR and NGOs also implemented a harmonized pay scale for refugee incentive workers to minimize staff turnover. End Summary.

----- POPULATION AND BUDGET

12. (U) The population of Dadaab refugee camp stands at 260,443 as of 24 January, with 2,730 new arrivals (2,581 from Somalia and 149 from Ethiopia) so far in January. New arrivals cite heightened insecurity, especially in the Middle and Lower Juba regions, drought, and food insecurity as the main reasons for fleeing Somalia. Despite the suspension of World Food Program (WFP) aid in al-Shabaab controlled areas, there has not been a dramatic increase in the number of asylum seekers (reftel), although UNHCR anticipates the arrival trend could increase over the next several months. UNHCR's current 2010 budget for Dadaab is \$24.5 million and is based on a December 31, 2010 population of 325,000 refugees in the Dadaab camps. The budget did not include the costs to extend Ifo or any other camp nor for a large Somali influx due to the suspension of WFP food in Somalia. UNHCR staff in Dadaab admit that the current funding level barely covers the basic needs of the existing population and does not include such activities such as renovations or construction of classrooms or other infrastructure that is required for the burgeoning population.

----- SECURITY

13. (SBU) UNHCR and the other agencies in Dadaab have ramped up their security posture since late November due to various security

alerts, the fall of Doblei to al-Shabaab, and an increase in the reports of armed men in the camp. The most recent alert was a report from local tribal leader(s) that thirty armed men, ten men per camp with trained drivers, were dispersed in the camp and seeking to carjack international agency vehicles for use in Somalia. CARE also reported that, around Christmas, armed men observing the new food distribution point in Ifo camp were sighted. In response to these reports, UNHCR requested and received a detail of armed police located at the entrance to the Dadaab Main Compound (DMO). Armed administrative police have also started patrolling inside the DMO at night. UNHCR will be receiving an additional five vehicles to deploy to the camps to assist with police patrols.

¶4. (SBU) While UNHCR has not restricted any of its staff movements; Save the Children/UK (STC/UK), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), and CARE currently do not allow international staff to leave the DMO to travel or work in the camps. Other NGOs like Handicap International and FilmAid have slightly limited their movements or modified their schedules (i.e. suspension of evening screenings by FilmAid, CARE delaying the early-morning refueling of generators by one hour). Only in one case was an international staff member, an Oxfam employee seconded to NRC, completely removed from Dadaab, and this was due to a specific threat against Oxfam staff in the neighboring Wajir district.

IFO EXTENSION

¶5. (SBU) While negotiations with the central government for a fourth camp remain stalled, UNHCR has received permission for an extension of Ifo camp in the Lagadera district. The camp extension can potentially house up to 80,000 refugees and will border Section

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N of the existing Ifo camp. UNHCR hopes to divide the 3.5km x 4km plot into two sections (Ifo 2 and Ifo 3) with a one kilometer green corridor between the two sections. Each mini section could potentially house 30-40,000 refugees each with the central green corridor housing the office and accommodation compounds of the agencies working in the camp. The immediate aim is to relocate around 20,000 refugees from the floodplain in the existing Ifo camp with the remaining space for new arrivals and possibly relocating some refugees from the overcrowded Dagahaley camp. UNHCR will develop a budget for the extension and begin developing the site after the demarcation team from the Garissa County Council demarcates the land. As of January 25, the Garissa County Council had sent a demarcation team to Dadaab but has not officially informed UNHCR of its results. As reported reftel, UNHCR is currently unsure of how it will fund the extension but speculates that it could draw upon the UNHCR Reserve Fund or possibly launch a separate appeal.

HOST COMMUNITY AND ENCROACHMENT

¶6. (U) Relations with the host community remain problematic though relations have been slowly improving over the past year. Encroachment by both refugees and locals erecting shelters and shops into areas not designated for these activities, especially in the market areas and green spaces, continues to concern both UNHCR and the other agencies. WFP has difficulty in bringing trucks to the food distribution points (FDP) due to the expansion of local businesses around the FDPs and subsequent constriction of truck routes. Lutheran World Federation (LWF), in charge of camp management, also reported that the local councilors continue to sell plots to both refugees and locals even after a decree by the Garissa County Council that all unauthorized structures will be dismantled. Even after the issuance of this decree, LWF heard that the councilor from Hagadera sold an additional four plots of land. All the NGOs continue to report difficult encounters with the local authorities and tribal leaders over their hiring decisions; in many cases not because they did not hire locals but because they did not hire the "right" locals (those affiliated or related to councilors or other local leaders).

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

17. (U) UNHCR continues to review its distribution of implementing partners by sector or camp in order to better meet minimum international standards. In 2009, UNHCR divided the health care activities, previously managed solely by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), between the International Rescue Committee (IRC) now working in Hagadera, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) in Dagahaley, and GTZ in Ifo. For 2010, UNHCR divided the education sector, previously managed solely by CARE, into two sections. CARE will continue to manage primary education, but Windle Trust Kenya will assume responsibility for secondary education at the beginning of January (septel). In addition, IRC has been designated to take over gender-based violence (GBV) prevention activities in Hagadera from CARE in August, and STC/UK is discussing with UNHCR the possibility of taking over infant and child feeding awareness and education activities.

18. (U) On January 1, UNHCR and the NGOs also implemented a new harmonized pay scale for refugee incentive workers in order to minimize high staff turnover. The new pay schedule is based on generic job functions and qualifications instead of NGO-specific position descriptions. The different incentive scales between NGOs had been a serious constraint to agencies, especially those in the education sector, as staff constantly switched between NGOs seeking higher incentives with many NGOs losing staff after they had spent considerable fund training the staff.

Comment

19. (SBU) UNHCR and NGO staff in Dadaab have very different views of the current security situation in Dadaab. Some believe that NGOs overreacted with their decision to restrict international staff to the DMO. Others cite the ever-increasing number of security alerts and reports of armed individuals in camp and fear that it will just be a matter of time before a kidnapping or other serious security incident occurs. All agencies working in Dadaab do hope that UNHCR

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will be able to proceed with the Ifo extension in order to provide some relief from the seriously overcrowded conditions but stress that that the extension does not solve the problem -- a fourth camp is still needed, especially if there is a mass influx of new arrivals over the coming months.

YATES